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THE
TRUE CHRISTIAN'S
PROGRESS TO PERFECTION;

WITH PARTICULAR APPLICATION TO THE

TWO SACRAMENTS of BAPTISM and the
LORD'S SUPPER;

BEING

THE SUBSTANCE OF THREE SERMONS

Preached at St. JOHN'S Church, MANCHESTER,

By the Rev. J. CLOWES.

Published at the Request of the Congregation.

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M DCC LXXXVI.

THE TRUE CHRISTIAN
PROGRESS TO PERFECTION

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TWO SACRAMENTS OF BAPTISM AND THE
Lord's SUPPER

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HEBREWS, VI. Part of 1st V.

*Therefore leaving the Principles of the Doctrine of Christ,
let us go on to Perfection.*

THE Christian Life hath ever been considered as a progressive State, wherein the obedient Soul advanceth from one Degree of Grace to another, still drawing nearer and nearer towards Perfection. This is what the Apostle remindeth his Hebrew Converts of in the Words of my Text, wherein he directeth them to leave *the Principles of the Doctrine of Christ*, that is, not to rest contented with the first Notions or Knowledges they had received, or with the first Steps they had taken towards the Kingdom of Jesus Christ; but *to go on to Perfection*, that is, to labour to become per-

fect in the Grace and Love of the Lord; to take Possession of the Kingdom for which they had set out; or as St. Paul expresth it, *forgetting those Things that are behind, to reach forth unto those Things that are before; to press towards the Mark, for the Prize of the high Calling of God in Christ Jesus;** or as it is expressed by St. Peter, *Giving all Diligence, add to your Faith Virtue, and to Virtue Knowledge, and to Knowledge Temperance, and to Temperance Patience, and to Patience Godliness, and to Godliness Brotherly Kindness, and to Brotherly Kindness Charity.*†

The Words of my Text thus explained, I propose to shew from them

1st. The Danger of resting satisfied with first Attainments in Religion, or the Knowledge of Jesus Christ.

2dly. The Nature, Reasonableness and Blessedness of leaving first Principles, and going on to Perfection.

And 1st. There are but too many, it is to be feared, who having once set their faces towards

* Philippians iii. 13. 14.

† 1 Pet. i. 5, 6, 7.

towards Jesus Christ, and done some slight Work of Repentance, and experienced some few Convictions of the Guilt of Sin, and the Vanities of temporal Things, and the Corruptions of their own Natures, and the Necessity of their Regeneration, do suddenly stop short at this Entrance upon a divine Life, this Beginning of their Christian Course, this first Dawn or Day-break of the Light of the Sun of Righteousness, and taking up their Rest therein, think it sufficient to have gone thus far, without ever attempting or even intending to go further.

But alas! who cannot see the great Danger and Deceitfulness of such Conduct? for what can it profit to lay the Foundation of a House, unless we proceed to raise the Superstructure? What can it profit to set forward on a Journey, unless we continue our Travels till we arrive at the Place for which we set out?

The Christian Life is frequently called in holy Scripture a new Birth, by Reason that the true Christian is really and truly born anew; he is made a new Man; he entereth upon a new Life; he gaineth new Tempers, Habits, and

and Ways of Thinking and acting; he becometh an Inheritor of a new World; *old Things are passed away, and all Things in him become new*; how plain then is it to see, that supposing a Man to stop at the Beginning of this new Birth; supposing him to cease growing in this new Life, before he is come to full Age and Maturity, he must be a Sort of monstrous or imperfect Production, and by no Means a complete and perfect Christian.

Our blessed Lord speaketh of a Person who began to build a Tower, but was not able to finish it; and saith of such an one, that *all who go by mock him, saying, this Man began to build, but was not able to finish.**

In this Character our Lord alludeth to the Folly and Danger of resting in first Attainments in Religion and Godliness, that is, of fancying that our Work is done when perhaps we have but just begun it; when we have possibly experienced in Ourselves some slight Motions towards a divine Life; some faint Rays of heavenly Light beginning to dawn upon us; some Compunction of Heart for living so long
separate

* Luke xiv. 28. 29. 30.

separate from God in Sin and Vanity. These Things indeed are the Beginnings of Holiness and Heaven in the Soul; they are, if I may so express it, the Foundations of the Tower or holy Temple within us, for our God to dwell in; but how plain is it to see, that if we rest satisfied with these Beginnings, with this laying only the Foundations of God's House, we do much impose both upon God and upon Ourselves!

We read in holy Scripture of some of the Children of Israel, who in their Journey from Ægypt towards the Land of Canaan, began to repent of their purpose, and to wish themselves back again amongst the *Flesh-pots of Egypt*;* they had set forward indeed in the good Way; nay, they had made large Advances therein; but for Want of a sincere Resolution to press forward to the End of their Journey, they grew faint-hearted and wished to turn back again.

Now what is here recorded of the Children of Israel, will be found true of all those Christians, who in their Journey from spiritual Ægypt to the heavenly Canaan, are contented merely to have

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* Exod. xvi. 2, 3. Numb. xi. 4, 5.

set out, without a sincere Resolution also to press forwards to the End of their Journey; they may perhaps leave the Land of Ægypt, that is, they may turn their Backs upon some few Sins; and they may possibly travel also some few Days Journey into the Wilderness; that is, they may experience some small Trials and Temptations of the Christian Life; but if their Purpose be not stedfast to proceed further; if they do not look for a full Reward, and labour to enter into entire Possession of the heavenly Canaan, which is the true Love, Righteousness and Rest of God perfected in the regenerate Soul, they will then do as the faint-hearted Children of Israel formerly did, they will repent that they ever set out; they will wish themselves back again in their old Land of carnal Delights; nay, it is more than probable, they will return to that Land; and what is still worse, they will find there *seven other Spirits more wicked* than that which had been cast out, according to our Lord's Parable concerning the unclean Spirit;* *and thus their last State will be worse than their first.*

Having thus then pointed out the Danger of resting

* Matt. xii. 43, 44, 45.

resting in first Attainments in Religion, I shall now proceed to shew the Nature, Reasonableness and Blessedness of following the Apostle's Advice, and going on to Perfection.

Perfection and the Progress thereto is thus described in various passages of the holy Scriptures, "*Walk before Me*, saith God to Abraham, *and be thou PERFECT*;"* *Mark the PERFECT Man*, saith the Psalmist, *his End is Peace*;"† "*The Path of the just*, saith the wise Man, *shineth more and more unto PERFECT Day*;"‡ *Be ye PERFECT* saith the Lord, *even as your heavenly Father is perfect*;"§ again, *if thou wilt be PERFECT*, go sell *that thou hast*, and give to the poor, and thou shalt have *Treasure in Heaven*; and come follow me;|| again, "*Every one that is PERFECT shall be as his Master*;"* to which may be added the Testimony of St. Paul, "*Till we all come in the Unity of the Faith, and of the Knowledge of the Son of God, unto a PERFECT Man, unto the Measure of the Stature of the Fullness of Christ*;"† and in another Place, "*That the Man of God* may

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* Gen. xviii. 1.

† Psalm xxxvii. 37.

‡ Prov. iv. 18.

§ Matt. v. 48.

|| Matt. xix. 21.

* Luke vi. 40.

† Ephes. iv. 13.

may be PERFECT, thoroughly furnished unto every good Work;* and also the Testimony of St. James, "Let Patience have her perfect Work, that ye may be PERFECT and entire, lacking Nothing;† and lastly, the Testimony of St. John, "Herein is our Love made PERFECT, that we may have Boldness in the Day of Judgment;‡ and again, "PERFECT Love casteth out Fear, he that feareth is NOT MADE PERFECT IN LOVE.§

From these, and many other similar passages of holy Scripture, we are plainly taught, in what Perfection consists, and what is the Nature and Manner of our Progress towards it. It consists in Conformity to God; and Conjunction with him; in being renewed in his Image and Likeness; in being purified through his Love; in being enlightened through his Wisdom; in becoming hereby perfect Men; that is, being fashioned through Regeneration after a perfect or heavenly Form, which is the Form of the Divine Order, Harmony, Purity and Peace, according to the heavenly unchangeable

* 2 Tim. iii. 17.

† James i. 4.

‡ 1 John iv. 17.

§ 1 John iv. 18.

ble Law and Spirit of Justice and Judgment, Righteousness and Truth, from Jesus Christ in the inner Man, manifesting itself in all good Thoughts, Words, and Works in the outward Man: And it consists further in a consequent Deliverance from the Forms and Powers of Sin and Ungodliness; from the Misery of our own tormenting Passions; from the Impurities, Perplexities, Fears, and Uneasinesses, which ever attend the unpurified unregenerate Soul that is not at Peace with God.

And as this appears, from the above Scriptures, to be the true Nature of Christian Perfection, so our Progress towards it consists, according to the same Scriptures, in walking in the Ways of God's Commandments; in setting the Lord Jesus Christ continually before our Eyes, as our manifested God, and Redeemer; in following his Example; *in forsaking all*, that is, all our own Will, our own Wisdom, our worldly Affections and Attachments, our carnal Concupiscencies, which are opposite to the Spirit, and Life, the Tempers and Dispositions of Jesus Christ, that so all the holy Influences of his Word and Kingdom

may have full Admission to our humble Hearts, and become exalted and operative therein, untill we are thoroughly changed and renewed thereby, and made the Children of his Purity, Power, and Peace, meet to stand in his Presence and Glory, and the Bliss of his Kingdom, which is the great End of our Creation, and the very Sum and Substance of all the Counsels of our God towards us.

This it is to *go on to Perfection*, which is a Point, though never to be fully attained, yet to which we may be approaching nearer and nearer to all Eternity; inasmuch as it is highly credible, both from the Testimony of Reason and Scripture, that the good Soul's Purification and Regeneration, through divine Influence, will continue advancing from one Degree of Glory to another through the boundless Ages of eternal Duration.

The Reasonableness and Blessedness then of thus going on towards Perfection in Godliness, or a divine Life, must surely be obvious to every considerate and thinking Person; for if the Soul be thus capable of increasing in Knowledge and Goodness, in Wisdom and Love

Love from the Lord Jesus Christ; if it may thus be daily making further Advances towards the true Perfection of it's Nature and Happiness; if it may daily be rendered more pure from the Defilements of Sin, and Self, and thereby separated further from the Kingdom and the Powers of Darkness, and admitted to a closer and more intimate Union with the Angels of Light; if I say this be really the Case with us all, then what can be more reasonable, what more blessed, than to press forwards towards this State of Perfection?

Besides—it is the Nature of every Way of Life, that the more it is practised, so much the more familiar it groweth, and consequently is more beloved by the Person who practiseth it.

This is singularly the Case with Respect to an divine Life, consisting in the Knowledge and Love of Jesus Christ. The more this Life is practised by and becometh familiar to the Soul, so much the more pleasant and satisfactory it is rendered at the same Time: He who stoppeth short indeed, and standeth still, without looking for the *Perfection* of this Life, experienceth little of it's Comforts; but he who becometh truly

truly obedient to the divine Grace and holy Love; he who will make no Reserves with his heavenly Lord and Redeemer, but like good Caleb* of old, *wholly and fully followeth the Lord his God*, cleaving stedfastly and entirely to him; and being resolutely determined to become his both in Body and Soul, and to be moulded altogether after his Image of perfect Love and Wisdom, Humility and Chastity: A such an one entereth indeed upon the full Consolations of the divine Life; the further he advanceth therein, the more he is astonished at it's encreasing Glory and Blessedness; every fresh Step he taketh openeth to his View a Prospect of brighter Scenes than the last; he singeth every Day a new Song unto the Lord; not that he meeteth with no Troubles and Trials in his Way, for he experienceth many; but then he findeth that they all work for his greater Purification and Bliss; by making him more humble in Himself, and more faithful to his God; he is afraid therefore of Nothing so much as of standing still in the Way to that glorious Kingdom before him; where he perceiveth

* Numb. xiv. 30. Joshua xiv. 9.

ceiveth still new Glories, new Treasures, new Delights offered to his Acceptance; he walketh on therefore with a calm and steady Pace, neither deterred by Troubles, nor dispirited by Fears, nor turned back by delusive Temptations, nor discouraged even by his own Frailties and Imperfections, knowing of a Certainty that the Lord Jesus Christ is before him, and with him, and that the more steadfastly he endureth to the End, the more he shall assuredly see of the Lord's great Deliverances, till he finally join in that blessed Song, *"Now is come Salvation, and Strength, and the Kingdom of our God, and the Power of his Christ; for the Accuser of our Brethren is cast down, which accused them before our God Day and Night."*

To conclude—If we are not trifling, Beloved, with God and our everlasting Peace, we shall certainly take into Consideration these great and weighty Truths; we shall bethink ourselves what a dangerous Folly it is to stop short in the Way of eternal Life, and content ourselves with taking up *false Resting-places* therein; we shall reflect how much Mischief we do thereby

thereby unto our Souls; and how much Despite unto the Grace of our God; we shall represent to ourselves what a poor and contemptible Kind of Virtue and Religion that Man's is, who doth not wish and labour to become daily more virtuous and religious, and what unworthy Notions he must entertain of Communion with God and Heaven, who doth not daily strive to be further advanced therein.

And on the other Hand we shall not fail to set before our Eyes the great Reasonableness and Blessedness of going on to Perfection in the Ways of God, and the Purification of our Souls from all Evil of worldly, fleshly and selfish Love; we shall consider how we are called by the Lord Jesus Christ to live united with him; to open our Hearts to his holy Influences; to become daily purer Temples of his holy Spirit; to advance daily to a nearer and closer Communion with him and his Angels in Love and Righteousness, and good Works.

And if we rightly and in true Earnest take these Things into Consideration, they will then
assuredly

assuredly have their due Effect upon our Lives and Conduct. We shall then no longer deceive Ourselves, or suffer Ourselves to be deceived, with a false and foolish Piety, with a Kind of wavering between God and his Enemies, between Heaven and Hell, between Salvation and Destruction, *balting thus between two Opinions,* * in the *Unstableness* of the *double-minded*, but turning our Hearts and Faces wholly towards the Lord Jesus Christ, in true Denial of Ourselves and all Ungodliness, we shall not rest till every Power of the Enemy be subdued; till every ungodly Form of Iniquity be destroyed; till the contrary Powers and Forms of Righteousness and Truth be established; till the Divine Image be fully and perfectly restored; and through the Opening and Operation of the Kingdom of Jesus Christ in our Hearts and Lives, we can truly say, *Thine is the Kingdom, and the Power, and the Glory.*

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SERMON

* 1 Kings xviii. 21. James i. 8.

S E R M O N H.

WHAT hath been said in the foregoing Discourse concerning the great Danger of resting in the *Principles* or Beginnings of Holiness, together with the great Reasonableness and Blessedness of going on to *Perfection* in a divine Life, may be very justly and profitably applied to the two Sacraments of the Lord's Supper. For it is possible we may rest in the *Principles* of those holy Ordinances; it is possible also we may go on to *Perfection* therein; the first State is full of Folly and Danger; the second is full of Reasonableness and Blessedness, as I shall now proceed to shew in Relation to each of these Sacraments.

And 1st. In Relation to the Sacrament of Baptism.

There are but too many, it is to be feared, who resting in the *Principles* of Baptism, that is, in the outward *Form* or *Sign* thereof, and never
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looking further towards it's *Perfection*, that is, to the true inward and spiritual *Grace* signified thereby, fancy themselves pure and regenerate Christians, merely because they have been Partakers of such an outward Ordinance, when they were in their Infant State.

But, Beloved, need I be at any pains to expose before you the Danger and the Folly of such a Conceit? For what can the mere *outward* Washing of Water do towards the *inward* Purification of the Soul from Sin, or towards it's Regeneration in a divine and holy Life? Sin is an internal Defilement of the Soul, arising from unclean Affections and Thoughts, which in Man's natural State are opposite to God and his Righteousness; how then can mere outward Water wash away such inward Uncleanness, and make the Soul pure and holy in God's Sight? It may indeed be a *Type*, or *Representative*, of such inward Washing and Purification, and so indeed it is, and according to that Sense it was practised and instituted by our blessed Lord; but yet who doth not see that to rest therein, and to suppose *that* to be the Substance and Reality, which is Nothing but the Figure

and the Type, is deceiving ourselves in the most gross and dangerous Manner?

By the outward Form of Baptism we are introduced into the Christian Church; we receive the Name of Christians; we are marked with the Mark of Jesus Christ; thus we are put in a State of attaining to Purification from Evil, and Regeneration of Life; and thus far all is done according to Divine Order and Wisdom, because both Order and Wisdom require such external Signs and Ceremonies, as Tokens of, and as Introductions to the internal Graces and Virtues which they represent; but then to suppose it enough to be introduced into the Christian Profession, to receive the Name of Christians only, to put on a mere outward Badge of our belonging to Christ, without advancing any further;—what Eyes cannot see that in such Case we frustrate the great End and Intention of the divine Grace and Ordinance?

For what can it avail us with Respect to Salvation to have been introduced only into the Christian Church, if we do not afterwards walk and live according to that Profession we have

have made, and that Society to which we belong? What can it avail us again to have the Name of Christians, if we do not go on to attain what is signified by the Name, viz. the Spirit and inward Qualities of Christians? Or lastly, what can it avail to put on a mere outward Mark of our belonging to Christ, if we do not put on his inward Tempers also; if we do not form our Hearts, our Understandings, and our Lives, according to the pure and heavenly Spirit of his Commandments? Surely the most ordinary Understanding can see, that these *Externals* of Christianity, these *Principles*, or *Beginnings*, or *Introductions* to a divine Life cannot profit, unless they are a Means of our attaining unto the internal Things, the Ends and Intentions signified by them.

Such mere outward Professors of Religion will do well to attend to these Words of the Lord, *Many will say unto me in that Day, Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in thy Name, and in thy Name have cast out Devils, and in thy Name done many wondrous Works? And then will I profess unto them, I never knew you.*

you; depart from me ye that work Iniquity."* In the same Manner may the outward Professor urge, Lord, have I not been baptized in thy Name? have I not been introduced into thy Church? have I not had thy Mark stamped on my Forehead? then will he say to such, *I never knew you; Depart from me ye that work Iniquity;* ye that have nothing to plead but your external Holiness, whilst ye have neglected to cleanse yourselves from Iniquity within, without which Cleansing no Soul can be clean in my Sight.

Having thus then considered the great Danger and Absurdity of resting in the mere Principles, or outward Form of Baptism, I shall now proceed to point out the Nature, Reasonableness and Blessedness of going on to *Perfection* in that holy Ordinance.

The *Perfection* of the holy Ordinance of Baptism is thus expressed to us in holy Scripture, where speaking of the Lord Jesus it is said of him, *He shall baptize you with the Holy Ghost and with Fire;*† and in another Place, *As* many

* Matt. vii. 22: 23.

† Matt. iii. 11. Mark i. 8. Luke iii. 16. John i. 33.

many as have been baptized into Christ, have put on Christ; * and in another, Repent and be baptized every one of you in the Name of Jesus Christ for the Remission of Sins, and ye shall receive the Gift of the Holy Ghost; † and again, Therefore we are buried with him by Baptism into Death, that like as Christ was raised up from the Dead by the Glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in Newness of Life; ‡ and lastly, Wash ye; make you clean; put away the Evil of your Doings from before mine Eyes; cease to do Evil; learn to do well. ||

In these several Passages of holy Scripture are made known to us the *internal* Nature and Uses of Baptism, as represented by the *external* Form and Sign thereof, and which consist, according to the true sense of those Passages, 1st, in the Soul's Purification from Evil, signified by putting away the Evil of our Doings, by the Remission of Sins, and being buried with Christ by Baptism unto Death, and 2dly, in it's Renewal, Growth, and Advancement in a divine and holy Life, signified by learning

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* Galat. iii. 27.

† Acts 2. 38.

‡ Romans vi. 4.

|| 1 Isaiah 16, 17.

to do well, by putting on Christ, and by being baptized with the Holy Ghost and with Fire.

For Baptism denotes Washing; and Washing may be either *natural*, or *spiritual*, either applied to the *Body*, or to the *Soul*; the *Body* is washed we know with *natural* Water, but the *Soul*, or *Spirit*, is washed with *spiritual* Water; for there is *spiritual* Water, as well as there is *natural* Water; *spiritual* Water is the Divine Truth of God's Holy Word, and it is of this Water our Lord speaks, when he says, "*He that believeth in me, out of his Belly shall flow Rivers of LIVING WATER;*"* and in another Place, "*If thou knewest the Gift of God, and who it is that saith unto thee, Give me to drink, thou wouldest have asked of him, and he would have given thee LIVING WATER;*"† and accordingly Jehovah in the Prophet calls himself the *Fountain of LIVING WATERS.*"‡ *Spiritual* Water therefore cometh from the Lord JESUS CHRIST, the manifested Jehovah, and

* John vii. 38. † John iv. 10. ‡ Jerem. ii. 13.

and is his heavenly Gift to all that truly believe on Him; and Man cometh to this Water, and washeth in it, and thereby receives true spiritual *Baptism*, or Purification, when he converts himself unto Jesus Christ as his God, and the Fountain of all Divine Good and Truth, and lives a Life conformable to his Commandments, in putting away all Evils of the Flesh and Spirit, and willing, and thinking, and doing the Thing that is right.

Here then we may see plainly what is meant by going on to Perfection in the Sacrament of Baptism: It is to go on by Repentance and Obedience towards the thorough Purification of our Souls from all Evil; from every Defilement of Sin and Uncleanness; from the corrupt Workings of the old Man in the Vanities and Lusts of selfish, sensual and worldly Love; and it is in this Spirit of Repentance and Obedience to turn unto Jesus Christ as the manifested Jehovah, the Fountain of all Good and Truth, to receive from him the *Baptism of the Holy Ghost and of Fire*; that is, to put on his divine Wisdom and divine Love; to let this his holy Spirit rule in our Hearts, and in our

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Lives,

Lives, till it be perfectly formed in us; till it hath fashioned us anew in the Regeneration *after the Image and Likeness of him that made us*; till we are rendered meek and merciful, kind and charitable, patient and contented, Lovers of God, and Lovers one of another, as the Gospel was designed to make us; or as the Apostle expresseth it, till *according to his Mercy we be saved by the* WASHING OF REGENERATION, AND RENEWING OF THE HOLY GHOST.*

And what now, Beloved, can be more reasonable, what more blessed than to go on towards this *Perfection* in the true Sacrament of Baptism? For if to be purified from the Disorders of a sinful, a miserable Nature; if to be delivered from the Errors and Delusions of a vain, a false, a worldly Wisdom and Happiness; if to have our Souls opened to the Reception of their chief, their only Good, and our Eyes to the Contemplation of the most beautiful, the most glorious Objects; if to be admitted to Conjunction with Jesus Christ and his holy Angels, and to be made Partakers thereby of a Divine Nature; if to have enkindled in our
Souls

* Tit. iii. 5.

Souls an holy and heavenly Fire, even the Fire of sacred Love and Charity, to burn up all that is contrary to itself, and make us alive thereby unto the Bliss of Heaven; if to be thus changed from Men into Angels, and from being *dead in Sin* to be made *alive unto God*; from being blind in Ignorance, to be made to see by the Wisdom of God; from being asleep in Vanity, and Wickedness, and Misery of this World, to be made awake unto the Realities, Purities, and Blessedness of an eternal Existence in the Kingdom of Jesus Christ—If, I say, there be any Thing reasonable, any Thing blessed, in any, or in all of these Things, then it is surely equally reasonable, it is surely equally blessed to press forwards daily, in Repentance and Faith, towards the *Perfection* of that spiritual Baptism by which alone they are to be attained.

Are we resting then in any *Principles* or *No-*
tions of Baptism, short of this it's true Nature and *Perfection*? Oh, let us consider earnestly how much Injury we are doing thereby to our own Souls, by taking up with Signs, and Forms, and Figures, and neglecting to enter
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into the Substance, Solidity, and Comfort of the divine Institution. Let us bethink ourselves, in Time, how little will the Sign of the Cross, or the Name of a Christian, or the Washing of *outward* Water, profit us at that Day, when we are to stand at the *Judgment Seat of Christ*, if we have nothing else at that Time to plead for us. Will the Lord, think we, accept the Washing, or Baptism, of the Body, for that of the Spirit? or the Sign of the Cross marked on the Forehead, for the Crucifixion of the Flesh? or the Name of a Christian for the Nature, Tempers, Life, and Fruits of his Followers? Surely if we have mistaken those external Things for the internal Things they were to represent, they will then but rise up in Judgment against us, and instead of availing us in the Matter of Salvation, they will but serve to aggravate our Condemnation. On the other Hand, let us impress deeply on our Minds the infinite Blessedness and high Reasonableness of *going on to Perfection* in the true *inward* Baptism signified by the *outward* Washing of Water. By so doing we shall become truly clean in God's Sight, our Sins through

through Repentance will be remitted, that is, they will be put away and separated from us that they cannot hurt us; whilst by Faith and Love towards the Lord Jesus Christ, we shall experience daily the Power of his Resurrection enabling us to walk in the Newness and Blessedness of a divine Life; thus shall we proceed from the *outward* to the true *inward* Baptism of the Spirit, till being washed from all the Uncleaness of selfish, and sensual, and worldly Love, we become renewed in that Image of heavenly Love and Charity, and good Works, which hath Peace with God here, and hereafter is admitted into *the Inheritance of the Saints in Light*.

And O merciful Jesus, the *Author and Finisher* of this heavenly Baptism, give us all, we beseech thee, a right Faith and Love towards thee, that believing thee to be Jehovah manifested in the Flesh, and walking in the Ways of thy Commandments, we may ever approach unto Thee as *our only God*, and have Conjunction with thee through thy Word, and thereby experience that Thou art indeed *the Fountain*
opened

opened for Sin and Uncleanness! And give us
Grace, O Lord, so to continue steadfast and pa-
tient in washing at this Fountain, that every
Spot and Defilement of Sin may finally be
done away, and our Flesh may come again as
the Flesh of a little Child, and we may be cured
of our Leprosies! AMEN*

** Zech. xiii. 1. I will purge away all the
Uncleanness of flesh, and sensual, and worldly
Love, we become renewed in that Image of
heavenly Love and Charity, and good Works,
which hath been with God here, and hereafter
is admitted into the habitation of the Saint in*

*And O merciful Jesus, the Father and Fi-
light of the heavenly Father, give us all, we
believe thee, a right Faith and Love towards
thee, that believing thee to be Jehovah mani-
fested in the Flesh, and walking in the Ways
of thy Commandments, we may ever approach
unto Thee as our very God, and have Commu-
nion with thee through the Word, and thereby
experience that Thou art indeed the Fountain
of Life and Grace.*

SERMON

S E R M O N III.

WE shall now proceed to apply the above Reasoning to the holy Sacrament of the Lord's Supper.

There is but too much Cause to fear that many stop in the *Principles* of this most holy Ordinance; they think it enough to be Partakers once in a Month of the outward Bread and Wine distributed at the Lord's Table; and if at such Times they do but call to their Remembrance what Christ hath done and suffered for them, and feel in themselves some Kind of Tenderneſs and Affection, excited by ſuch Remembrance, they fancy they have done their Duty perfectly, and are ſincere and worthy Receivers of that moſt holy Sacrament.

But, Beloved, permit me to caution you not to deceive yourſelves in a Matter of ſuch high Conſequence; the holy Sacrament of the Lord's Supper hath both an outward and an inward Part; the outward Part is *the Bread*
and

and Wine, which the Lord commanded to be received; the inward Part is the real Body and Blood of Christ, of which it is said by the Lord himself, *Except ye eat the Flesh of the Son of Man, and drink his Blood, ye have no Life in you.* *

If then we rest contented with the outward Part, without seeking after the inward and essential Part, the *Life-giving Flesh and Blood of the Son of Man*, how plain is it to see that we deprive our Souls of that Part which can alone be profitable to our Salvation!

For what can the mere outward Bread and Wine do towards the saving of a Soul, that is, towards it's Nourishment in a divine Life? Those Elements can reach no higher than the Body, and can affect only the animal Nature; they cannot reach the Soul, or convey to it any divine Grace or Virtue; It is the *Flesh and Blood of Jesus Christ*, that is, his holy Love, his pure Wisdom, which can alone profit and nourish the Soul; to be satisfied therefore with receiving outward Bread and Wine, without looking for and feeding on some more inward

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• John vi. 53.

and spiritual Food represented by them, is the grossest and most dangerous Delusion.

Hence it is, that some who frequent the Lord's Table, when they depart from it, live like the Rest of the World, in the same Spirit of Worldly-mindedness, Vanity and Dissipation, with as little of the Spirit of Jesus Christ in their Hearts, as if they had never been at his Table at all: The Reason is, because they have received nothing there but the outward Elements of Bread and Wine; they have rested contented with the mere *Form* and *Shew* of approaching the Lord's Table, without partaking of the *Spiritual*, the *heavenly* Food there provided; thus they have left their Souls un-fed, un-nourished, un-edified, in any thing truly holy; and the certain Consequence of such Conduct must necessarily be, that when they are departed from the outward Ceremony, they will return again to the same State and Temper of Mind which they brought thither, because their Hearts and inward Habits have undergone no Change.

All such Persons will do well to consider the Case of that Man in the Gospel, who being

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invited,

invited, went to the Marriage, but *had not on a Wedding-Garment*, to whom the King said, *Friend, how camest thou in hither not having on a Wedding-Garment, and he was speechless; then said the King unto the Servants, Bind him Hand and Foot, and cast him into outer Darkness.**

Even so will the Lord say unto all those who approach his Table, and feed only on Bread and Wine, without thinking of, much less feeding on the inward Things signified thereby; *Friend, how camest thou to my Table with such carnal Notions and Dispositions? couldest thou not have known that mere Bread and Wine cannot nourish and strengthen thy Soul? couldest thou not have discerned under them my Flesh, which is Meat indeed, and my Blood, which is Drink indeed?†* wherefore then didst thou not come prepared in true Repentance and Charity, to see and to feed on that spiritual and heavenly Food, which I give to those that desire it, and which would have truly nourished in thee a divine and eternal Life?—Then will all such carnal Guests remain *Speechless* at these Questions,

* Matt. xxii. 11, 12, 13. † John vi. 55.

Questions, and the Lord will say to his Servants,
*Bind them Hand and Foot, and cast them into
 outer Darkness.*

Having thus then considered the Danger of
 resting in the *Principles*, that is, in the *outward
 Form or Sign* of the Lord's Supper, I shall now
 proceed to point out the Nature, Reasonableness
 and Blessedness of going on to *Perfection* in that
 holy Ordinance.

The *Perfection* of the Sacrament of the Lord's
 Supper, together with the Nature and Manner
 of our Progress towards it, is thus described to
 us in holy Scripture, *Jesus said unto them, I
 am the Bread of Life; he that cometh to me
 shall never hunger, and he that believeth on
 me shall never thirst; and again, I am the
 living Bread, which came down from Heaven;
 if any Man eat of this Bread he shall live for
 ever; and the Bread that I will give is my
 Flesh, which I will give for the Life of the
 World; and again, Verily, verily, I say
 unto you, Except ye eat the Flesh of the Son of
 Man, and drink his Blood, ye have no Life in
 you. Whoso eateth my Flesh and drinketh my
 Blood, hath eternal Life; for my Flesh is Meat*
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indeed, and my Blood is Drink indeed: He that eateth my Flesh and drinketh my Blood, dwelleth in me, and I in him: He that eateth me, even he shall live by me;* and in the Revelations, Behold, saith the Lord, I stand at the Door and knock; if any Man hear my Voice, and open the Door, I will come to him, and will sup with him, and he with me;† again, Blessed are they which are called unto the Marriage-Supper of the Lamb.‡ It is written also of the same spiritual Food, that Man shall not live by Bread alone, but by every Word that proceedeth out of the Mouth of God;§ and hence come divers Exhortations and Admonitions, as where it is said, Blessed are they that hunger and thirst after Righteousness, for they shall be filled;|| and in another Place, Labour not for the Meat that perisheth, but for that Meat which endureth unto everlasting Life, which the Son of Man shall give unto you:** Not to mention many other Passages of Scripture to the same purport.

From

* John vi. 35. 51. 53. 54. 57. † Rev. iii. 20.
 ‡ Rev. xix. 9. § Deut. viii. 3. Matt. iv. 4.
 || Matt. v. 6. Isaiah ly. 1. 2. ** John vi. 27.

From the true and plain Sense of all the above Passages taken collectively, we learn in general, that there is *spiritual Food* as well as *natural* or *material Food*; there is also a *spiritual Hunger* and *Thirst* as well as a *natural Hunger* and *Thirst*; there is besides a *spiritual Eating* and *Drinking*, as well as a *natural Eating* and *Drinking*; and lastly, that as the *Body*, or *bodily Life*, is nourished, strengthened, and refreshed, by taking proper Quantities of natural Nourishment, that is, of natural Meat and Drink of a wholesome Quality, so the *Spirit*, or *spiritual Life*, is also nourished, strengthened, and refreshed by taking proper Quantities of spiritual Meat and Drink, of a wholesome Quality.

But what shall we say is this spiritual Meat and Drink, of a wholesome Quality, which is thus necessary for spiritual Nourishment? We are informed in the same Scripture, that it is the real *Body and Blood of Jesus Christ*; but whereas the *Body and Blood of Jesus Christ* are Things *spiritual*, and not Things *material*; and whereas all spiritual Things have Reference to Love and Wisdom, or to Goodness and Truth, JESUS CHRIST being the most essential

Love

Love and Goodness, and the most essential Wisdom and Truth, we may hence conclude of a certainty, that by the *Body of Christ*, or spiritual Meat, is meant the life-giving Principle of his essential Love or Goodness, and by the *Blood of Christ*, or spiritual Drink, is meant the life-living Principle of his essential Wisdom or Truth. This he calls his *Flesh*, which *he gives for the Life of the World*; the Reason is, because all true eternal Life is the Life of Love and Wisdom, or of Goodness and Truth, and this Life is from JESUS CHRIST ALONE, the manifested Jehovah, and no Man can partake of this Life but so far as he receives it from *Jesus Christ*.

Behold here then what is the real essential Food administered at the holy Table of the Lord's Supper, as declared to us in the above Scriptures; but we are further taught how we are to partake of that Food.

This is made known to us in these Words, *If any Man hear my Voice and open the Door, I will come to him and sup with him, and he with me*; and again, *Blessed are they that hunger and thirst after Righteousness*; and again, *He that cometh to me shall never hunger,*
and

and he that believeth on me shall never thirst; and again, Labour not for the Meat that perisheth, but for that Meat which endureth to everlasting Life.

From these, and many other similar Passages of holy Scripture, we are plainly taught, how we may partake of the real substantial living Food which Jesus Christ gives, and which is Jesus Christ, and how we may be nourished thereby in a heavenly or eternal Life—we must hear his Voice, and open the Door; we must hunger and thirst after his Righteousness; we must come unto him, and believe on him; we must labour for that Meat which he gives.

It may be expedient to observe that a Distinction is here made between hearing the Voice of Jesus Christ, and opening the Door to him; as also between hungering and thirsting after Righteousness; and likewise between coming to Christ, and believing on him. This Distinction is very remarkable, and if well attended to, will unfold to us the Nature of spiritual Nourishment, in a most edifying, solid, and satisfactory Manner. The Distinction is grounded on that which was made above, between the Body and

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the *Blood* of Christ, or between *Love* and *Wisdom*, between *Goodness* and *Truth*; that is, between *Meat* and *Drink*; for as the natural or bodily Life of Man is nourished, not by material *Meat alone*, or by material *Drink alone*, but by proper Quantities of *each* united, even so his spiritual Life is nourished, not by spiritual *Meat alone*, or by spiritual *Drink alone*, that is, not by *Love alone*, or by *Wisdom alone*, not by *Goodness alone*, or by *Truth alone*, not by the *Body of Christ alone*, or by his *Blood alone*, but by a proper Union and Commixture of *each* of these spiritual Principles together.

Accordingly we find, that agreeable to this Distinction between spiritual *Meat* and *Drink*, there are two different Parts or Principles in Man, adapted to the Reception of these different Kinds of Nourishment; the one is the *Will*, the other the *Understanding*; each of these Parts, or Principles, hath its proper *Food* or *Nourishment*; each also hath its *Hunger* and *Thirst*; the proper Food and Nourishment of the *Will* is *Love*, and every thing appertaining to Love, as *Goodness*, *Charity*, and the like; and the proper Food or Nourishment of the *Under-*
standing

standing is *Wisdom*, and every thing appertaining to *Wisdom*, as *Truth*, *Knowledge*, and the like; the *Desire of Love* in the *Will* is its *Hunger*, and the *Desire of Wisdom* in the *Understanding* is its *Thirst*; the *Will* therefore, with the converted and regenerate Christian, receives and feeds on the *Body of Christ*, that is, on his *Love*, *Goodness*, &c. and his *Understanding* receives and feeds on the *Blood of Christ*, that is, on his *Wisdom*, *Truth*, &c. thus the *Will* *hungers*, the *Understanding* *thirsts*; the *Will* *comes to Christ*, the *Understanding* *believes on Him*; the *Will* *bears the Voice of Christ*, the *Understanding* *opens the Door* to him; both the *Will* and the *Understanding* however, receive *Nourishment* from *Christ*, even the *Nourishment* of his eternal ever-blessed *Life*, and with the truly humble, penitent, and obedient *Disciples*, these two *Principles* are *one*, forming *one Mind*, constituting *one* heavenly *Man*, a *Form* of incomparable *Order*, *Harmony*, and *Beauty*, and ever acting in perfect *Unity*; they are capable nevertheless of being divided, and they are so divided with all those, who *know* and *understand* what is right.

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and good, but who do not *love* and *practise* it. It appears to be the great and blessed End of the Lord and his Gospel to Man, to unite these two Parts or Principles, to restore them to due Subordination, to give each its proper Food and Nourishment, and thereby supply each with its true Life, Strength and Perfection; and this End is fulfilled, when Man, with his *Will-principle* hungers after, feeds upon, and daily grows in the Divine Life of *Love* or *Goodness*, by coming to *Jesus Christ*, forsaking Sin, and obeying the holy Commandments, and with his *Understanding* thirsts after, drinks into, and is daily refreshed by the *Divine Wisdom* or *Truth* of *Jesus Christ*, by believing on him, and treasuring up in itself his heavenly Words, Counsels, and Instructions.

Behold here then the true Nature of the *Perfection* of the Sacrament of the Lord's Supper, together with the Nature and Manner of our *Progress* towards it. And need any thing now be said on the Reasonableness and Blessedness of thus going on to Perfection in this holy Sacrament? For what can be more reasonable than that we should give our Souls their proper Food?

Food? Every Creature, we find, hath its appointed Food proper for its Support and Nourishment, and if it be deprived of that Food it presently grows weak and dies. Our Bodies have their appointed Food, without which neither their Health, Strength or Life can possibly be preserved; and so it is also with our Souls; only let it be remembered that the Food of the Soul is spiritual, according as it is written, *Man doth not live by Bread alone, but by every Word that proceedeth out of the Mouth of God;* to deny ourselves then spiritual Food is of all Things most unreasonable, being a Kind of Self-Murder, whereby we kill and destroy in our Souls the Principle of a divine and heavenly Life; but to give our Souls this Food, to feed and nourish, to strengthen and refresh our spiritual Part with the *Word of God*, with the *Body and Blood of Ckrift*, with a Participation of Love and Wisdom, from the Lord Jesus; to grow thus from *Babes* unto *perfect Men*; to form in ourselves the *Man of God* thoroughly furnished unto all good Works; to feed thus upon the *bidden Manna*, and to eat the *Fruit of the Tree of Life*, which is in the midst of the *Paradise of God*;* to

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be

* Rev. ii. 7. 17.

be admitted thus to the Banquet of Angels, and to eat Bread in the Kingdom of God; what can be more reasonable, what more blessed than the Participation of such a Sacrament?

And yet, reasonable and blessed as all this must appear to sober, unprejudiced Minds, it is to be feared that but few comparatively taste and experience the real Blessedness and Reasonableness thereof. Alas! we too many of us sit down satisfied and contented with the *Principles* and outward *Forms* of Godliness, lulling thus our Consciences into a deep Sleep, that we cannot hear the Voice which would call us to a more inward and substantial Devotion. We take up with the Outside and Shell of Religion, *the Husk*, if I may so call it, of the divine Mercy, and for want of a true Repentance and inward Conversion of Heart, to the Lord of Heaven, we never enter in to taste of *the Kernel*, to feed on the *Feast of fat Things*, *the Feast of Wines on the Lees*; of *fat Things full of Marrow*, of *Wines on the Lees well refined*, which the Lord of Hosts hath made in his holy Mountain unto all People* that truly fear him and keep his

* Isaiah xxv. 6

his Commandments. Thus we starve our Souls in the midst of Plenty, and instead of being nourished and strengthened in a divine Life, through a daily Participation of heavenly Food, we remain Day after Day in the same weak, sickly, and puny state, as to our spiritual Man, that we were in when we first drew Breath.

But Brethren these Things ought not so to be; such Conduct will not bear us up when we come into another World; it may serve to blind the Eyes of Men, but it cannot escape the Notice of God; it may lull our Consciences to sleep here, but it cannot make us awake hereafter to the Joys of Eternity. Oh then, let us deal more fairly and reasonably with our Souls; *leaving the Principles of the Doctrine of Christ, let us go on to Perfection*; to Perfection in the Love and Wisdom of the Lord Jesus Christ; to Perfection in that heavenly Life, that heavenly Nature, which he wanteth to form in us, and to communicate to us; to Perfection in all holy Charity, Goodness, Meekness, Righteousness, Temperance, and all other Virtues of the Christian Life, to the full Removal of Sin and Self, and all the Powers of Evil

Evil and Darknes. Let me not however here be misunderstood, as if it was my Intention to call any from a constant Participation of *the outward Form* of this Holy Sacrament. No; *the most perfect* Followers of Jesus Christ will assuredly find such outward visible Communion of his Body and Blood expedient and profitable for them, whilst they continue in the Tabernacle of Flesh; and they will ever be thankful for every Opportunity of sitting down with their Brethren at the Holy Feast; but then they will know, and be taught of the Lord, what is the true End and Design of this *visible* Communion, viz. to lead them to feed *daily* on the heavenly Food by *invisible* Communion with their God and Saviour, according to that Petition in the Holy Prayer, *Give us this Day our daily Bread*; thus by the outward Sacrament they will find excited in them a greater *Hunger and Thirst* after the inward Sacrament of *Righteousness*, which is the *living Body and Blood of Jesus Christ* in their own Souls.

And may all who name the Name of Christ be led to a daily Participation of this *inward* Sacrament! may all taste its Sweetness! may all experience

experience its Life-giving Virtues! may all for this Purpose come unto Jesus Christ, the manifested Jehovah, who is the only giver of the heavenly Food! But oh! may all be careful to come in the Spirit of a true Repentance, in Humility and Meekness of Mind, with a real Desire to depart from Sin, and to walk in the *Newness* of a regenerate Life! then should we enter indeed into the Substance and Comfort of the Gospel Covenant. Then should we no longer deceive ourselves with mere Forms and Shadows of Things without Life, but we should be led through *Forms* to their *Essences*, through *Shadows* to their living and eternal *Realities*. For then advancing daily in the Regeneration, and being daily fed with the Body and Blood of *Jesus Christ* in our inner Man, we should grow continually thereby; we should know this to be *the Meat which endureth to everlasting Life*; and we should thankfully experience its heavenly Virtues, in forming in us that new and heavenly Man, which would have Power over all Evil, and rejoice evermore in fulfilling all the will of God, and standing in the Kingdom of his eternal purity and peace.

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And O Holy Jesus, excite in us, we beseech thee, the Spirit of a true Repentance and Conversion to Thee, that so we may no longer delight to feed upon the Husks of mere carnal and worldly Consolations, but that *hungering* and *thirsting* after thy *Righteousness*, we may know and taste the superior Delights of thy Love and Truth; and enjoying thus the Peace of continual Communion with Thee, may thus partake *daily* of the Sacrament of thy blessed Body and Blood, and experience thus a *daily* Growth in thy heavenly Life, till from *Babes* we become *Men*, from *natural* become *spiritual*, and from the *Principles* of thy Doctrine make continual Advances towards *Perfection!*
AMEN.



T H E E N D.

